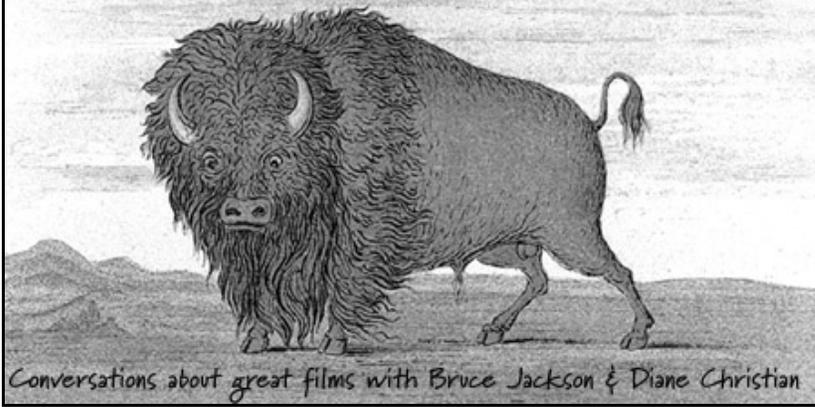


The Buffalo Film Seminars



ORSON WELLES (George Orson Welles, 6 May 1915, Kenosha, Wisconsin— 10 October 1985, Hollywood, sometimes credited as O.W. Jeeves and G.O. Spelvin) did it all: actor, director, writer, producer, editor, cinematographer, shill for Gallo Wines. His 1938 radio adaptation of H.G. Wells "War of the Worlds" panicked thousands of listeners. His made *Citizen Kane* 1941, which tops nearly all lists of the world's greatest films, when he was 25; it was his first film. In his later years he played himself, but he got to do that only because the self he created was so interesting. His bio lists more than 160 acting credits, beginning as Death in the 1934 film *Hearts of Death*. Many of those credits were as "narrator": he was the offscreen voices of the narrator in "Shogun" and Robin Masters in "Magnum P.I." He played some of history's great characters: Cardinal Wolsey in *A Man for All Seasons* 1966, Falstaff in *Chimes at Midnight* 1965, Harry Lime in *The Third Man* 1949, Cesare Borgia in *Prince of Foxes* 1949, and *Macbeth* 1948. Not one of the 14 films he completed is uninteresting and several are masterpieces. The films are: *Citizen Kane* 1941, *The Magnificent Ambersons* 1942, *The Stranger* 1946, *The Lady from Shanghai* 1948, *Macbeth* 1948, *Othello* 1952, *Mr. Arkadin* 1955, *Touch of Evil* 1958, *The Trial* 1962, *Chimes at Midnight* 1965, *The Immortal Story* 1968, *F for Fake* 1973, and *Filming 'Othello'* 1978. He won a lifetime achievement Academy Award 1971, was nominated for *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Citizen Kane* in 1941 and 1942, won for best writing original screenplay for *Citizen Kane*. The American Film Institute gave him its Life Achievement Award in 1975.

JOSEPH COTTEN (15 May 1905, Petersburg, Virginia—6 February 1994, Westwood, California, pneumonia) acted in a lot of awful Italian films toward the end of his career (e.g. *Il Giustiziere sfida la città/Syndicate Sadists/Rambo's Revenge* 1975 and *Gli Orrori del castello di Norimberga/The Torture Chamber of Baron Blood* 1972) and he did a lot of TV series work from the mid-50s through the mid-70s on such series as "The Love Boat," "HardyBoys/Nancy Drew Mysteries," "The Rockford Files," "The Streets of San Francisco," "The Virginian," "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In," "It Takes a Thief," "Wagon Train," and "General Electric Theater." He was in nearly 100 theatrical films, the most famous of which are probably *The Third Man* 1949 and two films directed by Orson Welles, *The Magnificent Ambersons* 1942 and *Citizen Kane* 1941. Some of his other films are *Heaven's Gate* 1980, *Airport '77* 1977, *Twilight's Last Gleaming* 1977, *Soylent Green* 1973, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* 1970, *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* 1964, *Touch of Evil* 1958, *Niagara* 1953, *Portrait of Jennie* 1948, *Duel in the Sun* 1946 and *Gaslight* 1944.

HERMAN J. MANKIEWICZ (7 November 1897, NYC—5 March 1953, Hollywood, uremic poisoning) wrote 75 screenplays, some of which were *The Pride of St. Louis* 1952, *The Pride of the Yankees* 1942, *Dinner at Eight* 1933, and *Girl Crazy* 1932.

GREGG TOLAND (29 May 1904, Charleston, Illinois—26 September 1948, Hollywood, coronary thrombosis) was one of the great cinematographers. Nearly all of his successors credit his work and his imagination. Some of his films were *The Bishop's Wife* 1947, *The Best Years of Our Lives* 1946, *December 7th* 1943, *The Outlaw* 1943, *The Little Foxes* 1941, *The Long Voyage Home* 1940, *The Westerner* 1940, *The Grapes of Wrath* 1940, *Raffles* 1940, *Wuthering Heights* 1939, *Intermezzo: A Love Story* 1939, *Come and Get It* 1936, *Les Misérables* 1935, *Nana* 1934, *Tugboat Annie* 1933, *Indiscreet* 1931, *Raffles* 1930, *Bulldog Drummond* 1929, and *Bat* 1926. He was nominated for six Oscars: *Citizen Kane*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *Wuthering Heights* (won), *Intermezzo: A Love Story*, *Dead End*, and *Les Misérables*.

ROBERT WISE (10 September 1914, Winchester, Indiana) edited 12 films and directed 40. Some of the films he directed are *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* 1979, *The Hindenburg* 1975, *The Andromeda Strain* 1971, *Star!* 1968, *The Sand Pebbles* 1966, *The Sound of Music* 1965,



SIGHT AND SOUND, published by the British Film Institute, surveys directors and critics every year for their favorite films. Here are the top ten from each group in 2002:

Critics

- 1 Citizen Kane (Welles)
- 2 Vertigo (Hitchcock)
- 3 La Règle du jeu (Renoir)
- 4 The Godfather and The Godfather part II (Coppola)
- 5 Tokyo Story (Ozu)
- 6 2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick)
- 7 Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein)
- 7 Sunrise (Murnau)
- 9 8½ (Fellini)
- 10 Singin' In the Rain (Kelly, Donen)

Directors

- 1 Citizen Kane (Welles)
- 2 The Godfather and The Godfather part II (Coppola)
- 3 8½ (Fellini)
- 4 Lawrence of Arabia (Lean)
- 5 Dr. Strangelove (Kubrick)
- 6 Bicycle Thieves (De Sica)
- 6 Raging Bull (Scorsese)
- 6 Vertigo (Hitchcock)
- 9 Rashomon (Kurosawa)
- 9 La Règle du jeu (Renoir)
- 9 Seven Samurai (Kurosawa)

Two for the Seesaw 1962, *I Want to Live!* 1958, *Run Silent Run Deep* 1958, *Somebody Up There Likes Me* 1956, *Executive Suite* 1954, *The Desert Rats* 1953, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* 1951, *Blood on the Moon* 1948, *The Body Snatcher* 1945, *The Curse of the Cat People* 1944 and *Mademoiselle Fifi* 1944. He was also editor on Welles's *Magnificent Ambersons* 1942 and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* 1939. He won Best Picture Oscars for *The Sound of Music* and *West Side Story* 1961, Best Director Oscars for *The Sound of Music* and *West Side Story*, and Best Director Oscar nominations for *The Sand Pebbles* and *I Want to Live!*, and Best Editor Oscar nomination for *Citizen Kane*. In 1967 he won the Academy's Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award.

BERNARD HERRMANN 29 June 1911, NYC—24 December 1975, Los Angeles, heart attack) composed music for 117 films. IMDb bio: "The man behind the low woodwinds that open *Citizen Kane* 1941, the shrieking violins of *Psycho* 1960, and the plaintive saxophone of *Taxi Driver* 1976 was one of the most original and distinctive composers ever to work in film. He started early, winning a composition prize at the age of 13 and founding his own orchestra at the age of 20. After writing scores for Orson Welles's radio shows in the 1930s (including the notorious 1938 "The War of the Worlds" broadcast), he was the obvious choice to score Welles's film debut, *Citizen Kane* 1941 and subsequently *The Magnificent Ambersons* 1942, although he removed his name from the latter after additional music was added without his or Welles's consent when the film was mutilated by a panic-stricken studio. Herrmann was a prolific film composer, producing some of his most memorable work for Alfred Hitchcock, for whom he wrote nine scores. A notorious perfectionist and demanding (he once said that most directors didn't have a clue about music, and he blithely ignored their instructions--like Hitchcock's suggestion that *Psycho* 1960 have a jazz score and no music in the shower scene). He ended his partnership with Hitchcock after the latter rejected his score for *Torn Curtain* 1966 on studio advice. He was also an early experimenter in the sounds used in film scores, most famously *The Day the Earth Stood Still* 1951, scored for two theremins, pianos, and a horn section; and was a consultant on the electronic sounds created by Oskar Sala on the mixtrautonium for *The Birds* 1963. His last score was for Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* 1976 and died just hours after recording it. He also wrote an opera, 'Wuthering Heights,' and a cantata, 'Moby Dick.'"

Art Pierce: Orson Welles, The Mercury Theatre, and The Campbell Playhouse. From the Mercury Theatre website
(<http://www.unknown.nu/mercury/>)

The beginnings of The Mercury Theatre on the Air actually go back to the formation of The Mercury Theatre itself. Having successfully produced Marc Blitzstein's controversial labor union opera, *The Cradle Will Rock*, for the Federal Theatre Project in June of 1937, John Houseman and the 21-year-old "boy wonder" of the theatre, Orson Welles, decided to form their own theatrical producing company. In August of that same year The Mercury Theatre was born, starting off with total monetary assets of \$100 (about \$1150 in modern funds). Their first production, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, adapted by Mr. Welles (and set in fascist Italy), opened in New York on November 11 and created as much controversy as the young producers had hoped; The Mercury Theatre (along with the widespread public recognition of Orson Welles) was off and running.

By this time Orson Welles was already a radio veteran, having made frequent appearances on *The March of Time* as early as 1935 and, in fact, at the time of The Mercury Theatre's formation, was engaged in a seven-part dramatization of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, which was airing on Friday evenings between July and September of 1937 over the Mutual Broadcasting System. Although not officially a Mercury (the series had been airing for a few weeks before The Mercury even came into existence), several actors who were to become fixtures of The Mercury Theatre of the Air such as Martin Gabel, Alice Frost, Ray Collins, Virginia Welles (Mrs. Orson Welles), Agnes Moorehead, and Everett Sloane, appeared in the program, which Mr. Welles produced, directed, scripted, and starred in.

The summer of 1938 found Orson Welles (who was just finishing his season-long run as *The Shadow*) with the chance to display the talents of his Mercury Players on his own series to be broadcast from New York City. Initially to be called *First Person*

CITIZEN KANE (1941) 119 min

Joseph Cotten...Jedediah Leland
Dorothy Comingore...Susan Alexander Kane
Agnes Moorehead...Mary Kane
Ruth Warrick...Emily Monroe Norton Kane
Ray Collins...James W. Gettys
Erskine Sanford...Herbert Carter
Everett Sloane...Mr. Bernstein
William Alland...Jerry Thompson
Paul Stewart...Raymond
George Coulouris...Walter Parks Thatcher
Fortunio Bonanova...Signor Matiste
Harry Shannon...Kane's Father
Sonny Bupp...Charles Foster Kane III
Orson Welles...Charles Foster Kane
Alan Ladd...Reporter smoking pipe at end
Gregg Toland...Interviewer in 1935 Newsreel

Directed and produced by Orson Welles
Written by Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles
Original Music by Bernard Herrmann
Cinematography by Gregg Toland
Film Editing by Robert Wise
Art Direction by Van Nest Polglase
Chesley Bonestell...background painter
Bernard Herrmann...orchestra conductor, orchestrator, music arranger
John Houseman...assistant: Mr. Welles
John Houseman...editorial supervisor

Production Companies: Mercury Productions Inc. and RKO Radio Pictures Inc. Runtime: 119 min

Oscar nominations:

Best Writing, Original Screenplay (won)
Best Actor in a Leading Role Orson Welles
Best Art Direction-Interior Decoration,
Black-and-White Perry Ferguson,
Van Nest Polglase,
A. Roland Fields, Darrell Silvera
Best Cinematography, Black-and-White
Gregg Toland
Best Director Orson Welles
Best Film Editing Robert Wise
Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic Picture
Bernard Herrmann
Best Picture Orson Welles
Best Sound, Recording John Aalberg
National Film Preservation Board, USA 1989
National Film Registry

Singular, the 60-minute program went on the air on July 11, 1938 as *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*. During that first 9-week summer series, it became increasingly apparent to the more perceptive radio listener that The Mercury Theatre was something special. Unlike

many anthology series before and since, the stories were chosen because of their suitability to the radio medium. Also, the innovative use of sound-effects and music (by CBS staff composer/conductor Bernard Herrmann), combined with the gripping performances of Mr. Welles, made The Mercury Theatre one of the most compelling programs on the air. The stories presented were also out of the ordinary. Bram Stoker's Gothic horror tale, *Dracula*, opened the series, followed by, among others, *Treasure Island*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The 39 Steps*, *Abraham Lincoln*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. While ratings were not high, CBS executives knew they had a worthwhile prestige program on their roster, and Welles was invited to add the show to the regular CBS lineup beginning in September of 1938. By the time the second series of 13 Mercury Theatre shows ended on December 4, Orson Welles was as big a celebrity as radio had produced, all because of an updated version for the airwaves of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, adapted by Howard Koch (who was now scripting most of the shows) and John Houseman, but credited by the general public entirely to its director, producer, and star, Orson Welles.

Despite the show's dismal Crossley rating of 5.4, the fury created by the *War of the Worlds* broadcast proved to be the Campbell's Soup company that people were listening and, beginning December 9, The Mercury Theatre became The Campbell Playhouse, taking over the 9pm Friday time slot formerly held by the series Campbell had previously sponsored, *The Hollywood Hotel*.

While The Campbell Playhouse had a bigger budget than The Mercury Theatre, allowing for a weekly guest star from the stage or screen (which undoubtedly helped to boost the listenership to a respectable 14.4), the integrity and general flavor of the show remained much the same. Mr. Welles's co-stars were engaged only with his approval (he refused more than one well-known motion picture player) and generally fit into the proceedings very comfortably. Thus *Rebecca*, the debut show, could boast the presence of Margaret Sullivan, while other programs featured Katherine Hepburn, Burgess Meredith, Helen Hayes, Madeleine Carroll, Laurence Olivier, Gertrude Lawrence, Joan Bennett, Lionel Barrymore, and other prominent actors. The stories tended to lean more towards popular contemporary literature than did The Mercury, with many of the plays coming from the motion pictures or the best-seller list.

In the show's second season, it was moved from New York to Hollywood to accommodate Orson Welles and the other Mercury Players, who had signed a contract for their first picture at RKO (In the weeks prior to Campbell's move to the West coast, Mr. Welles was traveling back East for the broadcast every week, studying his script in route; TWA gave Welles a special award for being their best customer of 1939, with combined mileage of 311,425). His picture work eventually meant that he was forced to give up The Campbell Playhouse (his last broadcast was on March 31, 1940), but the series lived on for a season without him. Now directed by George Zachary and scripted by John Houseman and Willis Cooper (who would later write and produce the radio series *Quiet, Please!*), the post-Welles series continued to produce top-grade radio drama with an impressive array of guest stars but, as none of the recordings of the final season appear to exist, one can only speculate on the entertainment value of such shows as *Air Mail to Red Riding Hood* with Miriam Hopkins and Humphrey Bogart, *Kind Lady* with Gladys George and Herbert Marshall, *The Go-Getter* with Helen Twelvetrees, Randolph Scott, and Frank Morgan, and *My Client Curley* with Fred Allen and Beatrice Kay. Orson Welles produced and starred in several excellent radio series during the next decade,

but none ever matched the inventiveness and overall quality of The Mercury Theatre on the Air or The Campbell Playhouse.

George Turner: "Gregg Toland: Sharp Practice" Sight and Sound

Cinematography is the heartbeat of cinema. It's the one achievement of science, art and craft without which motion pictures could never have progressed beyond such parlour amusements as the zoetrope and praxinoscope. Earlier this year the American Film Institute conducted a poll to determine the 100 best movies of all time. *Citizen Kane* – made almost 60 years ago – won by a wide margin. American Cinematographer quickly followed with a poll to determine the 100 "best-shot" pictures of the century, and once again the overwhelming favourite was *Kane*. It also, of course, routinely wins the *S&S* world critics poll conducted every ten years (due again in 2002). An obvious reason for the astonishing audience response to this film is its look, the most remarkable aspect of which is the extraordinary sharpness of every element in every scene. This visual style, achieved in defiance of what was considered possible with the technology available, reflected the skill and taste of three men: producer/director/co-writer Orson Welles, director of photography Gregg Toland and unit art director Perry Ferguson.

Shallow focus, in which one part of the screen is in focus and the rest blurred, thus directing the viewer's attention to the key element of the action, had been the mainstay of cinematography since the coming of sound. The deep-focus technique perfected by Toland in *Citizen Kane* rendered all the elements – background, middle ground and foreground – in sharp focus, an effect admired by critic André Bazin on the grounds that: 1) it brings the viewer into closer contact with the scene than that which she would experience in reality; 2) it requires more mental participation on the viewer's part; and 3) it allows more ambiguity because the viewer's attention is not guided. Take the scenes in *Citizen Kane* where Kane and his wife are sitting at either end of a long dining table in his huge dream home Xanadu, the overbearing Kane looming monstrous and distorted in the foreground, his bored wife listless and diminishing in the distance, but both presented in sharp detail.

Roger Ebert, "Citizen Kane (1941)," 1998:

...Rosebud is the emblem of the security, hope and innocence of childhood, which a man can spend his life seeking to regain. It is the green light at the end of Gatsby's pier; the leopard atop Kilimanjaro, seeking nobody knows what; the bone tossed into the air in "2001." It is that yearning after transcendence that adults learn to suppress. "Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get, or something he lost," says Thompson, the reporter assigned to the puzzle of Kane's dying word. "Anyway, it wouldn't have explained anything." True, it explains nothing, but it is remarkably satisfactory as a demonstration that nothing can be explained. "Citizen Kane" likes playful paradoxes like that. Its surface is as much fun as any movie ever made. Its depths surpass understanding. I have analyzed it a shot at a time with more than 30 groups, and together we have seen, I believe, pretty much everything that is there on the screen. The more clearly I can see its physical manifestation, the more I am stirred by its mystery.

It is one of the miracles of cinema that in 1941 a first-time director; a cynical, hard-drinking writer; an innovative cinematographer, and a group of New York stage and radio actors were given the keys to a studio and total control, and made a masterpiece. "Citizen Kane" is more than a great movie; it is a gathering of all the lessons of the emerging era of sound, just as

“Birth of a Nation” assembled everything learned at the summit of the silent era, and “2001” pointed the way beyond narrative. These peaks stand above all the others.

The origins of “Citizen Kane” are well known. Orson Welles, the boy wonder of radio and stage, was given freedom by RKO Radio Pictures to make any picture he wished. Herman Mankiewicz, an experienced screenwriter, collaborated with him on a screenplay originally called “The American.” Its inspiration was the life of William Randolph Hearst, who had put together an empire of newspapers, radio stations, magazines and news services, and then built to himself the flamboyant monument of San Simeon, a castle furnished by rummaging the remains of nations. Hearst was Ted Turner, Rupert Murdoch and Bill Gates rolled up into an enigma.

Arriving in Hollywood at age 25, Welles brought a subtle knowledge of sound and dialogue along with him; on his Mercury Theater of the Air, he'd experimented with audio styles more lithe and suggestive than those usually heard in the movies. As his cinematographer he hired Gregg Toland, who on John Ford's “The Long Voyage Home” (1940) had experimented with deep focus photography—with shots where everything was in focus, from the front to the back, so that composition and movement determined where the eye looked first. For his cast Welles assembled his New York colleagues, including Joseph Cotten as Jed Leland, the hero's best friend; Dorothy Comingore as Susan Alexander, the young woman Kane thought he could make into an opera star; Everett Sloane as Mr. Bernstein, the mogul's business wizard; Ray Collins as Gettys, the corrupt political boss, and Agnes Moorehead as the boy's forbidding mother. Welles himself played Kane from age 25 until his deathbed, using makeup and body language to trace the progress of a man increasingly captive inside his needs. “All he really wanted out of life was love,” Leland says. “That's Charlie's story—how he lost it.”

The structure of “Citizen Kane” is circular, adding more depth every time it passes over the life. The movie opens with newsreel obituary footage that briefs us on the life and times of Charles Foster Kane; this footage, with its portentous narration, is Welles' bemused nod in the direction of the “March of Time” newsreels then being produced by another media mogul, Henry Luce. They provide a map of Kane's trajectory, and it will keep us oriented as the screenplay skips around in time, piecing together the memories of those who knew him.

Curious about Kane's dying word, “rosebud,” the newsreel editor assigns Thompson, a reporter, to find out what it meant. Thompson is played by William Alland in a thankless performance; he triggers every flashback, yet his face is never seen. He questions Kane's alcoholic mistress, his ailing old friend, his rich associate and the other witnesses, while the movie loops through time. As often as I've seen “Citizen Kane,” I've never been able to firmly fix the order of the scenes in my mind. I look at a scene and tease myself with what will come next. But it remains elusive: By flashing back through the eyes of many witnesses, Welles and Mankiewicz created an emotional chronology set free from time.

The movie is filled with bravura visual moments: the towers of Xanadu; candidate Kane addressing a political rally; the doorway of his mistress dissolving into a front-page photo in a rival newspaper; the camera swooping down through a skylight toward the pathetic Susan in a nightclub; the many Kanes reflected through parallel mirrors; the boy playing in the snow in the background as his parents determine his future; the great shot as the camera rises straight up from Susan's opera debut to a stagehand holding his nose,

and the subsequent shot of Kane, his face hidden in shadow, defiantly applauding in the silent hall....

“Citizen Kane” knows the sled is not the answer. It explains what Rosebud is, but not what Rosebud means. The film's construction shows how our lives, after we are gone, survive only in the memories of others, and those memories butt up against the walls we erect and the roles we play. There is the Kane who made shadow figures with his fingers, and the Kane who hated the traction trust; the Kane who chose his mistress over his marriage and political career, the Kane who entertained millions, the Kane who died alone.

There is a master image in “Citizen Kane” you might easily miss. The tycoon has overextended himself and is losing control of his empire. After he signs the papers of his surrender, he turns and walks into the back of the shot. Deep focus allows Welles to play a trick of perspective. Behind Kane on the wall is a window that seems to be of average size. But as he walks toward it, we see it is further away and much higher than we thought. Eventually he stands beneath its lower sill, shrunken and diminished. Then as he walks toward us, his stature grows again. A man always seems the same size to himself, because he does not stand where we stand to look at him.

from “Realism for Citizen Kane,” Gregg Toland, ASC. *American Cinematographer* (February, 1941)

Citizen Kane is by no means a conventional, run-of-the-mill movie. Its keynote is realism. As we worked together over the script and the final, pre-production planning, both Welles and I felt this, and felt that if it was possible, the picture should be brought to the screen in such a way that the audience would feel it was looking at reality, rather than merely a movie.

Closely interrelated with this concept were two perplexing cinetechanical problems. In the first place, the settings for this production were designed to play a definite role in the picture—one as vital as any player's characterization. They were more than mere backgrounds: they helped trace the rise and fall of the central character.

Secondly—but by no means of secondary importance—was Welles' concept of the visual flow of the picture. He instinctively grasped a point which many other far more experienced directors and producers never comprehend: that the scenes and sequences should flow together so smoothly that the audience should not be conscious of the mechanics of picture-making. And in spite of the fact that his previous experience had been in directing for the stage and for radio, he had a full realization of the great power of the camera in conveying dramatic ideas without recourse to words.

Therefore, from the moment the production began to take shape in script form, everything was planned with reference to what the camera could bring to the eyes of the audience. Direct cuts, we felt, were something that should be avoided whenever possible. Instead, we tried to plan action so that the camera could pan or dolly from one angle to another whenever this type of treatment was desirable. In other scenes, we preplanned our angles and compositions so that action which ordinarily would be shown in direct cuts would be shown in a single longer scene—often one in which important action might take place simultaneously in widely separated points in the extreme foreground and background. . . .

In passing, it may be mentioned that this technique of using completely ceilinged sets so extensively gave us another advantage: it eliminated that perpetual bane of the cinematographer—microphone shadows. The ceilings were made of

muslin, so the engineers found no difficulty at all placing their mikes just above this acoustically porous roof. In this position they were always completely out of camera range, and as there was no overhead lighting, they couldn't cast any shadows. Yet the ceilings were so low that the mike was almost always in a favorable position for sound pickup. I must admit, however, that working this way for 18 or 19 weeks tends to spoil one for working under more conventional conditions, where one must always be on the lookout lest the mike or its shadow get into the picture!

The next problem was to obtain the definition and depth necessary to Welles' conception of the picture. While the human eye is not literally a universal-focus optical instrument, its depth of field is so great and its focus change so completely automatic that for all practical purposes it is a perfect universal-focus lens.

In a motion picture, on the other hand, especially in interior scenes filmed at the large apertures commonly employed, there are inevitable limitations. Even with the 24mm lenses used for extreme wide-angle effects, the depth of field—especially at the focal settings most frequently used in studio work (on the average picture, between 8 and 10 feet for the great majority of shots)—is very small. Of course, audiences have become accustomed to seeing things this way on the screen, with a single point of perfect focus, and everything falling off with greater or less rapidity in front of and behind this particular point. But it is a little note of conventionalized artificiality which bespeaks the mechanics and limitations of photography. And we wished to eliminate these suggestions wherever possible....

It was therefore possible to work at apertures infinitely smaller than anything that has been used for conventional interior cinematography in many years. While in conventional practice, even with coated lenses, most normal interior scenes are filmed at maximum aperture or close to it—say within the range between f:2.3 and f:2.8, with an occasional drop to an aperture of f:3.5 sufficiently out of the ordinary to cause comment—we photographed nearly all of our interior scenes at apertures not greater than f:8—and often smaller. Some scenes were filmed at f:11, and one even at f:16!

How completely this solved our depth of field problem may easily be imagined. Even the standard 50mm and 47mm objectives conventionally used have tremendous depth of field when stopped down to such apertures. Wide-angle lenses such as the 35mm, 28mm and 24mm objectives, when stopped down to f:11 or f:16, become for all intents and purposes universal-focus lenses.

But we needed every bit of depth we could possibly obtain. Some of the larger sets extended the full length of two stages at the RKO-Pathé Studio, and necessitated holding an acceptably sharp focus over a depth of nearly 200 feet. In other shots, the composition might include two people talking in the immediate foreground—say two or three feet from the lens—and framing between them equally important action taking place in the background of the set, 30 or 40 feet away. Yet both the people in the immediate foreground and the action in the distance had to be kept sharp!

A further innovation in this picture will be seen in the transitions, many of which are lap-dissolves in which the background dissolves from one scene to another a short but measurable interval before the players in the foreground dissolve. This is done quite simply, by having the lighting on the set and people rigged through separate dimmers. Then all that is necessary is to commence the dissolve by dimming the background lights, effectually fading out on it, and then dimming the lights on the people, to produce the fade on them. The fade-in is made the same

way, fading in the lighting on the set first, and then the lighting on the players.

from "Citizen Kane Turns 50," George Turner. *American Cinematographer* (August 1991)

Fifty years ago, on May 1, 1941, RKO Radio unleashed its much-publicized and very controversial *Citizen Kane* on an expectant show world. It was the first feature film produced by a multi-talented young man from radio and stage, Orson Welles, who celebrated his 26th birthday five days after the New York premiere. Most of the critics loved it, some panned it. The Hearst newspapers pointedly ignored it, then attacked it because of the widely held opinion that it was based on the life of William Randolph Hearst.

The general public hated it, with theater men reporting more walkouts and demands for refunds than they could remember. Some exhibitors declared *Kane* an illustration of why blockbooking by film distributors should be outlawed. (Which it was, years later. RKO at the time would only allow theaters to book programs only in blocks of five features of *RKO's choice*, plus selected short subjects.)

Within the industry there was a great deal of resentment against the "boy-wonder" producer/director/star/co-author. He was, many complained, too self-assured, too inexperienced and had been given too much power. His chubby, mischievous face reminded everybody of that smartass kid who received all the straight A report cards in high school. The word "genius" took on an ugly connotation. The most popular gag in town was attributed to the hard-drinking and sharp-witted author of the screenplay, Herman J. Mankiewicz. Glancing up as Welles walked past, he is alleged to have remarked, "There, but for the grace of God, goes God."

It is said that Louis B. Bayer offered RKO president George Schaefer \$842,000—the combined negative and production costs—to destroy the negative and all prints. Mayer had done this before on a couple of occasions when he considered a picture to be un-American or anti-Hollywood.

At the 1941 Academy Awards ceremony (February 26, 1942), *Citizen Kane* received nominations for Best Picture, Best Actor (Welles), Best Direction, Original Screenplay (Mankiewicz and Welles), Cinematography (Gregg Toland, ASC), Art Direction (Perry Ferguson and Van Nest Polglase), Interior Decoration (Al Fields and Darrell Silvera), Sound Recording (John Aalberg), Film Editing (Robert Wise), and Music—Scoring of a Dramatic Picture (Bernard Herrmann). Boos from the audience greeted each announcement. Miraculously, *Citizen Kane* did receive an award for its screenplay and also was named Best Picture by both the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics.

The picture was a boxoffice flop, going some \$150,000 into the red, and Welles had become as popular as the pox among the RKO executives.

Deep focus photography had been utilized from time to time, most notably in 1931 by James Wong Howe, ASC in *Transatlantic*; by John Mescall, ASC in the 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein*, and by Toland in 1940 in both *The Westerner* and *The Long Voyage Home*. After *Citizen Kane* its use became widespread, especially in the so-called *film noir* films of the following decade.

The fact that all principal players (however excellent) were strangers to the screen also mitigated against audience acceptance. Today it's hard to imagine that Welles, Joseph Cotten, Ruth Warrick, Agnes Moorehead, Everett Sloance, Ray Collins, Paul

Stewart and Erskine Sanford were completely unknown to moviegoers.

from *This is Orson Welles. Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich*. Edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum. DaCapo Press NY 1998

I [Bogdanovich] had told Welles how difficult it was for many of the older directors we both admired to get a job. Not that it was anything new: D.W. Griffith, who practically invented it all, wasn't allowed to make a film the last seventeen years of his life. Orson himself had written very movingly of his single meeting with Griffith, and a lot of directors' stories were similar: Josef von Sternberg, Fritz Lang, King Vidor, Jean Renoir, John Ford. Without ever saying so, Orson must have connected himself to that sort of fate and he told me he had been deeply affected by our conversation. Now, out by the lake, he said: "You told me last night about all these old directors whom people in Hollywood say are 'over the hill,' and it made me so sick I couldn't sleep. I started thinking about all those conductors—Klemperer, Beecham, Toscanini—I could name almost a hundred in the last century—who were at the height of their powers after 75. And were conducting at eighty. Who *says* they're over the hill! I think it's just terrible what happens to Old people. But the public isn't interested in that—never has been. That's why *Lear* has always been a play people hate."

Did he think *Lear* became senile? I asked, and Orson answered: "he became senile by giving *power* away. The only thing that keeps people alive in their old age is power. . . . Take power away from De Gaulle or Churchill or Tito or Mao or Ho or any of these old men who run the world—in this world that belongs only to young people—and you'll see a 'babbling, slippered pantaloons.' It's only in your twenties and in your seventies and eighties that you do the greatest work. The enemy of life is *middle* age. Youth and old age are the great times—and we must treasure old age and give genius the capacity to function in old age—and not send them away." The very last film Orson Welles would prepare and almost make—the deal for which would fall apart (in France) shortly before his death—was his own very intimate adaptation of *King Lear*.

Welles "I want to use the motion picture camera as an instrument of poetry."

PB: What was your initial reaction to the Hearst blacklist on *Citizen Kane*?

OW: We expected it before it happened. What we *didn't* expect was that the film might be destroyed. And that was nick and tuck; it was very close.

PB: To the negative being burned?

OW: Yes. It was only *not* burned because I dropped a rosary

PB: What?

OW: There was a screening for Joe Breen, who was the head of censorship then, to decide whether it would be burned or not. Because there was tremendous payola on from all the other studios to get it burned.

PB: All because of Hearst's people?

OW: Yes. Everybody said, "Don't make trouble, burn it up, who cares? Let them take their losses." And I got a rosary, put it in my pocket, and when the running was over, in front of Joe Breen, a good Irish Catholic, I stood up and dropped my rosary on the floor and said, "Oh excuse me," and picked it up and put it in my pocket. If I hadn't done that, there would be no *Citizen Kane*.

PB: After *Kane*, you once said, "Someday, if Mr Hearst isn't frightfully careful, I'm going to make a film that's really based on his life."

OW: Well, you know, the real story of Hearst is quite different from *Kane's*. And Hearst himself—as a *man*, I mean—was *very* different. There's all that stuff about [Robert] McCormick and the opera. I drew a lot from that, from my Chicago days. And Samuel Insull. As for Marion [Davies], she was an extraordinary woman—nothing like the character Dorothy Comingore played in the movie. I always felt he had a right to be upset about that.

PB: Davies was actually quite a good actress—

OW: And a fine woman. She pawned all her jewels for the old man when he was broke. Or broke enough to need a lot of cash. She gave him everything, stayed by him—just the opposite of Susan. *That* was the libel. In other words, *Kane* was better than Hearst, and Marion was much better than Susan—whom people wrongly equated with her.

PB: You once said that *Kane* would have enjoyed seeing a film based on his life, but not Hearst.

OW: Well, that's what I said to Hearst.

PB: When!?

OW: I found myself alone with him in an elevator in the Fairmont Hotel on the night *Kane* was opening in San Francisco. He and my father had been chums, so I introduced myself and asked him if he'd like to come to the opening of the picture. He didn't answer. And as he was getting off at his floor, I said, "Charles Foster *Kane* would have *accepted*." No reply...And *Kane would* have, you know. That was his style—just as he finished Jed Leland's bad review of Susan as an opera singer.

PB: Where did *Kane's* trait of acquiring possessions come from?

OW: *That* comes directly from Hearst. And it's very curious—a man who spends his entire life paying cash for objects he never looked at. I know of no other man in history exactly like that. This jackdaw kind of mind.

PB: But *Kane* is a masterpiece of makeup. . . .

OW: Yes, but you have no idea what work there was to that, because it was long ago; we didn't have sophisticated things for makeup which made it easy. In those days—you don't know what it was—I came to work many days on *Kane* at two-thirty in the morning, to be made up to start work at nine. It took that long, with the spraying and the building. Maurie Seiderman was one of the two or three great makeup men of our time, and he's never really been allowed to do anything in the industry.

PB: Because he's too good?

OW: Yeah. How he worked! Two thirty in the morning was normal all the time. With the contact lenses I wore, which in those days drove you mad with pain. Because I was a baby; you know, it's very hard to be seventy years old and make it believable. But the thing that's never been printed is the truth about me as a young man in that film. I was then twenty-five, twenty-six—I've forgotten how old I was—but I had my face lifted up with fish skin and wore corsets for the scenes as a young man.

PB: Why? Were you heavier than you looked?

OW: Of course. Not only heavier, but I always had that terrible round moon face and it was all faked up with fish skins and

tucked under the hair. Everything. Just as though I were some terrible old leading man at the end of his day [laughs]. So I was just as heavily made up as a young man as I was as an old man! I could hardly move for the corsets and the fish skin and everything else. I read once—Norman Mailer wrote something or other—that when I was young, I was the most beautiful man anybody had ever seen. Yes! Made up for *Citizen Kane*! And only for five days!

PB: You mean you never looked like that?

OW: Never! I wish I had!

PB: But the important similarity between the two films is that *The Birth of a Nation* summed up all the techniques that had come before in silent films. It brought everything to a head, and *Kane* did that too, for the sound film.

OW: Yes, it summed things up, to a point. But it's not the technical advances that I think are important about *Kane*, it's the use of time and the way people are handled—that kind of thing.

From Orson Welles Interviews. Ed Mark W. Estrin. U Miss , Jackson, 2002

W: Really for me, Montaigne is the greatest writer of any time, anywhere. I literally read him every week like some people read the Bible, not very much at a time; I open my Montaigne, I read a page or two, at least once a week, just because I like it so much. There is nothing I like more.

—*In French, or*

W: In French, for the pleasure of his company. Not so much for what he says, but it's a bit like meeting a friend, you know. It's something very dear to me, something marvellous. Montaigne is a friend for whom I have a great

affection. And he has some things in common with Shakespeare, too Not the violence of course.

—*So you're a self-made cameraman, if one can put it like that?*

W: I've only been influenced by somebody once: prior to making *Citizen Kane* I saw *Stagecoach* forty times. I didn't need to learn from somebody who had something to say, but from somebody who would show me how to say what I had in mind; and John Ford is perfect for that. I took Gregg Toland as cameraman because he came and said he would like to work with me. In the first ten days I did the lighting myself, because I thought the directors should do everything, even the lights. Gregg Toland said nothing but discreetly put things right behind my back. I finally realized, and apologized. At the time, apart from John Ford, I admired Eisenstein—but not the other Russians—and Griffith, Chaplin, Clair, and Pagnol, especially *La Femme du Boulanger*. Today I admire the Japanese cinema, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, *Ugetsu Monogatori* and *Living*. I liked the cinema better before I began to do it. Now I can't stop myself hearing the clappers at the beginning of each shot; all the magic is destroyed. This is how I'd classify the arts, in order of the pleasure they gave me: literature first, then music, then painting, then the theatre. In the theatre there is an unpleasant impression that one gets; the people are looking at you, and for two hours you're a prisoner of the stage. But I am going to tell you a more terrible confidence; I don't like the cinema except when I'm shooting; then you have to know how not to be afraid of the camera, force it to deliver everything it has to give, because it's nothing but a machine. It's the poetry that counts.

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